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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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The weather is getting better slowly. We could use about another 10 degrees of warmth, but it hasn't been too bad otherwise. Well, okay, the past few weekends have been wet; my lawn looks great, but needs cutting. Maybe I'll be able to cut it before it turns into a meadow!

I think it's time for a vacation! It's still been extremely hectic at work. New major systems being put together and into place - what a nightmare. It's tough when a number of different groups are working toward a common goal, but doing so in an almost independent, yet disconnected, manner. It sometimes feels like one hand doesn't know what the other is doing! And this is all on top of our "regular" routine. And most days many of us are feeling like we're getting an information overload! It's tiring, to say the least.

I've been putting some more time going through some archives to relate some more Atari history, as seen through these and other online venues. But, there's been a shortage of hours in the day to spend a lot of time finding some of the pieces that I want to publish. I'll get there, and the archival articles will be worth the wait!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Yep, it's that time again. It's been a whole week since we got together. As has become the norm here in the Atari world, not much new is going on.

But to me, my attraction to the Atari world was never about Atari itself. Sure, they had some really, really cool technology that made the rest of the world sit up, gasp, and say "wow", but what I always found more interesting was the people.

We all had different opinions on just about everything, and most of the time we were able to respect each other’s points of view. How often do you see THAT these days?

I know what you’re thinking... "Yeah, those online mag guys and the execs at Atari Corp were always going out of their way to respect each other... NOT".

But I’m not talking about facemen and shills. I’m talking about the users and developers and dealers that were such a huge part of the Atari scene.

I HAD intended to talk about world affairs this week. You know the stuff... wars, elections, gas prices.

But I’ll cut it short and just pick one... eeny meany miney moe.... Gas prices...

There are a couple of those annoying chain letter emails going around again telling us that by buying gas from particular oil companies we’re supplying money to people who want to hurt us. But there’s a bright spot, according to the email... you can buy gas from one of these other companies because they don’t get their oil from the middle east. It’s legit, they swear, because the Department of Energy keeps tabs on it all.

Well, I did some checking on my own and, according to the DOE, every one of the ’safe’ oil companies import some oil from the middle east too... some of them import almost 2 million barrels a month.

Then there’s the "let’s not buy gas on Thursdays... That’ll show ’em" emails.

Of course, the situation isn’t helped by the fact that the president called rising gas prices "a tax on the american people". What?? Has anyone told him what gas prices are like in Europe? I personally find that a little hard to take from someone who made a large portion of his own money by selling his oil company to Saudis after largely ruining it.

All in all, it seems like we’re more interested in gimmicks and self-agrandizing rhetoric than with actual solutions these days. Remember back in the late 70’s? We had a gas crisis then too. But rather than place all of our eggs in the "gimmick" basket, we actually DID something to help ourselves. The price of a barrel of crude was largely out of our hands, so we found ways to use less of the stuff. We bought smaller, more fuel-efficient cars. We made sure that the thermostat was a couple of degrees lower. We turned off lights that weren’t in use.

But today, we seem to feel that it’s not only our right to use all the resources we can lay our hands on, but to gripe about having to pay for it.

Think about it... back then, we... wait for it... conserved. We tightened our belts and made due with what we could. Today, we seem intent on just changing the rules and blaming it on someone else.

Okay, I’ll step off my soapbox and get to the real reason for this

column now.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Ronald Hall tells us about his BBS:

"Okay, I've got Darkforce up and running right now. Tons of things remain to be done, but I wanted to let you guys access it and report anything amiss to me.

Obvious things:

Express is reporting the connect rate at 300 baud
Date is showing up as ":5" instead of "05"
CDROM section is not working - you'll probably just get a script error or a timeout. (don't even have CDs hooked up right now)
Bulletins and announcements are hopelessly out of date
The free prize giveaway has been suspended. :-)

The original user logs are still in place, so if you had visited us before and remember your username/password, you can log right in.

The initial sequence is:

telnet 24.177.21.241

escape character is "^]"

then an ASCII <return>

After that, the BBS software should kick in (God willing and the creek don't rise). :-)

I'm working this weekend (36 hours) so I'll just leave it up over the weekend then pull it back offline on my days off to start updating the bulletins and announcements.

The board supports ASCII text, VT52, and ANSI. ANSI is actually automatically detected if you're using it.

All comments and criticisms are welcome, especially suggestions as to solving any problems found. You can leave e-mail/feedback on the board itself, post here in the newsgroup, or email me personally."

Coda tells Ronald:

"Looking good so far. You might want to update your personal details though, as they claim that you're 37 <snigger>"

Ronald replies:

"Yeah...I'm a tad bit older than that now (43).

Lots of bulletins/announcement updates to be done. It'll take time but I'll get it."

Enrico Rolfi posts this about his website, dedicated to Music Studio:

"I'm going to setup a website dedicated to the great Music Studio by Activision. I'm trying to collect every version of this great program, and I also own the original MS version for Atari. But, I wasn't able to find the Atari ST version, so I thought I might look here. If you have a copy to share for free, please send me an email."

'Simon' tells Enrico:

"Great idea. I wasn't aware there was a '88 version (so I don't have it...) Please keep us informed with the website!"

Bill Glaholt adds:

"Great idea! I'll be a happy member, Enrico -- cept you forgot to post the url. I have a few MT32-based MS files that I did back in about '88-'89."

Enrico replies:

"The url for the site is:

http://www.themusicstudio.tk

it's still under development, though."

Peter Feddersen asks for help with a STacy power failure:

"Just finished fiddling with the SCSI on my trusty old STacy 2. It has the ADspeed chip installed, which means that the Power board barely fits over the slightly higher CPU-socket. Is this a problem?

After fitting the STacy back together again, I noticed a loose component, which I suspect have fallen out from some place near the power inlet. The component looks looks like a small dark brown resistor, but without legs. It has a completely cylindrical shape and is a couple of millimeters long. It also could be some sort of condensator.

I figure that this missing component is connected to the power failure. The STacy does not react at all when trying to power it up.

I cannot find any empty sockets or abandoned soldering islands on the up-side of the motherboard. Can anybody give me a hint?"

Peter West asks Peter F.:

"I don't know the Stacy insides, but could it be a fuse? If this has been dislodged, you won't get any power! If it is one, it should be in a clip or possibly spot-soldered to a pair of pads, though you say you can't find any empty soldering islands (could it be connected on the other side ?)."

Peter replies that he....

"Just found out that the "fallen component" is in fact situated on the print side of the maxtor HD."

Derryck Croker tells Peter:

"So unplugging the drive completely should allow signs of life?"

Well folks, that’s it for this time around. Tune in again next time, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - New Xbox To Be Media Hub
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" California Violent Game Bill
Donkey Konga 2!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Next-Generation Xbox to Be Media Hub

Microsoft Corp.’s next-generation Xbox gaming console will be more of a digital entertainment hub than its predecessor, making it even more of a PC hybrid than ever, Bill Gates told a meeting of business journalists on Monday.

The console, code-named Xenon, is due to be previewed in an MTV half-hour special later this month.

Gates, Microsoft’s chairman and co-founder, was vague on specific features of Xenon but said the company’s consoles would be evolving to include improved communications tools for making multiplayer online gaming more convivial.

He told the annual meeting of the Society of American Business Editors and Writers that Xenon’s software menu would be similar to that of the

company’s Media Center edition of Windows, which is designed for computers meant to be located in the living room.

"If you’re used to that menu, when you use this Xenon you’ll see a menu a lot like that that lets you get photos, TV, music and all those different things."

Video game players want to be able to chat with their buddies, know when others are present online, and will want to access their music and photos on their consoles in an interface already familiar to them, Gates said.

At a convention of hardware engineers last week, Gates said the company’s investments in Windows Media Center software have paid off, with more than a million copies sold since the launch of the operating system’s second version in October and a total of 2 million since the initial system shipped three years ago.

Gates also called the Web log phenomenon fantastic and joked that it’s become more difficult than ever to provide a single company message to the public given the number of Microsoft employees who are now blogging publicly.

"I keep thinking about when am I going to start doing a blog," he said in answer to a question. "My rate (of posting) has proven to be irregular so far. When I turn out at least two a month they’ll put me online," he joked.

The Microsoft chairman also drew guffaws when he took a dig at Apple Computer Inc. in response to questions about the rave reviews the competitor’s newest operating system, Mac OS X "Tiger," received upon release last week.

The overwhelming consensus was that Tiger was far and away the best consumer operating system available now, with Microsoft not expected to match it in features in Windows until the end of 2006 at the earliest in its "Longhorn" system.

Gates said he was pleased that the media were getting excited about computer operating systems. And then he took his jab at Apple, whose share of the consumer market is nearly 4 percent.

"You can always tell if you’re working on a Mac or a PC. Just take your applications and stick them in there and see if they run," he said, moments after calling Apple "the super-small market share guy."

"Donkey Konga 2" Jams with Hip-Hop, Electronica and Rock Tunes

Are you ready to crank your next party up a few notches? "Donkey Konga 2," the bongo-beating Nintendo GameCube sequel to last fall’s hit, ups the cool factor by making use of some of today’s hottest hip hop, electronica and rock tunes.

Music lovers can still rock out using their DK Bongos controllers, only now they can groove to hip-hop and R&B hits like "Rock the Boat" and "No More Drama," dance and electronica tunes like "High Roller" and rock hits like "All Star" and "The Anthem."

"We chose these new, popular songs to give consumers the chance to play

along to their favorite songs, ones they hear on the radio every day," explains George Harrison, Nintendo of America's senior vice president of marketing and corporate communications. "'Donkey Konga 2' provides a video game experience that crosses age barriers to expand the playing experience to the widest possible audience."

The television commercial for "Donkey Konga 2" features the music and musicians of rock band Good Charlotte. The spot shows band members delaying the start of a concert because they are occupied backstage playing "Donkey Konga 2."

Just as in the original game, up to four players beat the bongos and clap their hands in time to the music; the player with the best rhythm wins the round. Players can compete in a drum roll contest or earn coins to spend on new songs at the in-game shopping mall.

"Donkey Konga 2," Rated T for Teen, launches May 9. The game is available bundled with a DK Bongos controller or individually. For more game information, visit www.donkeykonga.com.

California Violent Video Game Bill Passes Committee

California lawmakers reconsidered and approved a bill in committee on Thursday that would ban the sale of violent video games to minors.

The California Assembly's arts committee passed the bill by Democratic Assembly Member Leland Yee on a 6-4 vote after taking it up for reconsideration.

The bill had failed to pass the committee on Tuesday when it fell a vote short of a necessary six votes.

The bill now goes to the full Assembly. If approved, it would go the state Senate for review.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, whose Hollywood film career includes violent movies, has not taken a position on the bill, which allows for $1,000 fines for violators and requires violent video games to be labeled.

"For the same reason we don't allow kids to buy pornography, cigarettes, or alcohol, we shouldn't allow them to go to stores and buy video games that teach them to do the very things we put people in jail for - abusing women, joining street gangs, killing police officers, or even assassinating President Kennedy," said Yee, a child psychologist, referring to scenarios in some video games.

Game developers and console makers say laws restricting game sales are unnecessary because their industry is doing a good job stopping minors from buying "Mature"-rated games.

However, the $10 billion industry expects bills restricting game sales to pass this year in Illinois, Michigan and North Carolina.

Two federal appellate courts have already ruled such laws violate the free speech guarantees of the First Amendment.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

AOL Treats Florida Emergency E-Mails As Spam

Emergency managers in Indian River County, hard-hit by hurricanes last year, thought the best way to get out weather alerts was by e-mail - until they learned that AOL was tagging the messages as spam.

"Because we send out mail in large numbers, it becomes a pattern for spam senders," said Basil Dancy, a county computer software engineer.

The problem started last year with frequent alerts during an unusually busy hurricane season when four major storms hit Florida, including two - Frances and Jeanne - that swept over Indian River County with winds above 100 mph.

About 4,200 people signed up for the county’s e-mail alert service, offering quick alerts on hurricanes, tornadoes and other weather emergenciess.

"In the 16 years I’ve been in this office, it is the No. 1 thing that best informs the public," said Nathan McCollum, the county’s emergency management coordinator.

But not everyone was receiving the alerts. "We know it’s going out but, in the heat of the moment, it’s not a reliable system," McCollum said.

The county is working with AOL to fix the problem. In the meantime, AOL users are being told to put the county’s e-mail account in their computer’s address book so their computers know to accept the messages.

Firefox Reaches 50 Million Downloads

Open-source browser Firefox has topped the 50 million download mark, 171 days after its release.

The creator of the browser, the Mozilla Foundation, noted on its Web site that it would create 50 limited-edition coins to commemorate the event. The coins would be given to users with the best stories of how they personally boosted the browser’s adoption.

The foundation also noted that a prize would be given to the Web site owner responsible for the 50 millionth download, although details of that prize have not been revealed.

In addition to giving away prizes, the foundation also praised the Firefox contributors on its SpreadFirefox site.

"The said browsers were dead," wrote the site's Web masters, Blake and Asa. "They said open source would never penetrate the mainstream. But you've never cared much for rules, have you?"

The site also includes stories of Firefox advocacy, including a photo of an 11 year old who created a temporary tattoo of the Firefox logo and affixed it to his forehead.

Firefox's growing popularity is notable, but it is still far behind the market leader, Internet Explorer, by a wide margin. IE currently dominates the market with 86.83 percent of users, according to Dutch analytics company OneStat.com.

But analysts and OneStat.com have noted that IE is losing its share steadily, and unless Microsoft makes some major changes to the browser or launches new promotion efforts, it is likely to keep dropping in usage.

Microsoft has responded to critics who say the company is not innovating quickly enough by pointing out that IE has had several improvements in recent years, especially in Windows XP SP2.

As Firefox becomes more popular, it is likely that the Mozilla Foundation will find itself addressing security concerns more often.

"People have been turning to Firefox because it's more secure," said Yankee Group analyst Jim Slaby. He pointed to the browser's adoption at universities as an indication of security-driven browser-switching.

But browsers that are more secure are that way, in part, because hackers are mainly interested in targeting the most popular applications, operating systems and browsers.

"As Firefox gets more widespread usage, it will become a more attractive target to hackers," Slaby noted.

Security Threats Branch Out From Windows to Mac, Linux

While Windows and other Microsoft Corp. products are the favorite targets of hackers, the malicious code writers are increasingly targeting software that run on other operating systems, including Apple Computer Inc.'s Mac and open-source Linux, a security research group said Monday.

In its list of the top 20 most critical Internet vulnerabilities in the first quarter of the year, the Sans Institute reported that software fixes were released for flaws in RealNetworks Inc.'s RealOne Player and RealPlayer. Security flaws were found in versions of the multimedia players running on Windows, Mac OS and Linux.

In addition, vulnerabilities were listed for Apple's iTunes music player, versions prior to 4.7.1, which runs on Windows and the Mac OS, as well as the Winamp mulitmedia player for Windows from Nullsoft, and the Helix Player for Linux.

"Hackers haven't stopped attacking Microsoft products, but they've started attacking everything else as well," Alan Paller, director of research for Sans said. "The reason is this is a huge criminal business now. Capturing

another 100,000 computers to be used for spam can be worth a million bucks."

The current trend among hackers is to spread through e-mail viruses that exploit a variety of popular software that people install on their computers, such as multimedia software and music players.

"The attackers are going after the programs you buy to install on your computer, rather than the programs that come with your computer," Paller said.

To close vulnerabilities in programs such as iTunes or RealPlayer, users often have to download the latest version, rather than just a patch, which is commonly used to fix operating-system flaws. As a result, consumers with dial-up connections are often most vulnerable, because they are the least likely to take the time to download the latest software, Paller said.

Besides multimedia players, patches were released in the first quarter for several Microsoft products, including the Windows License Logging Service, the Microsoft Server Message Block and Internet Explorer browser.

Patches also were released for Computer Associates International Inc.’s License Manager, which is found in most of its storage, security and database products; and versions of Oracle Corp.’s 9i, 8i and 8 databases; Application Server, Collaboration Suite and E-Business Suite.

Patches also were released for antivirus products from Symantec Corp., F-Secure Corp., Trend Micro Inc. and McAfee Inc.

Details on the vulnerabilities and patches are available on the Sans Institute website.

Spread of Sober E-Mail Worm Variant Slowing

A new variant of the Sober e-mail worm is still spreading on the Internet, but at a much slower rate than on Monday when it was the most prevalent worm on the Net.

The worm was first discovered on Monday at about 9 a.m. Pacific time, according to McAfee, a maker of antivirus products. McAfee rates the worm a "medium" risk for home users, but sees less risk for corporate users, said Craig Schmugar, a virus research manager at the Santa Clara, California-based company.

McAfee has dubbed this Sober variant Sober.P. "It may very well be the most prevalent variant to date. They keep getting a little bit worse in terms of prevalence," Schmugar said. In the first three hours of infection, McAfee’s online virus scanning tool helped 8000 users remove the new Sober variant, he said.

The worm tricks users into opening attachments with messages in both English and German. It uses different messages randomly and picks a language based on the operating system language. One of the German messages promises free tickets to the 2006 World Cup soccer in Germany, according to McAfee.

The attached file is a.zip archive. An error message is displayed when a

user opens the file. The worm then harvests e-mail addresses from the victim’s PC and sends itself to those addresses. The worm does no damage other than forwarding itself, which can potentially clog e-mail systems and slow down an infected PC, Schmugar said.

The original Sober worm appeared in October 2003. Since then many variants have hit the Internet. All the Sober variants spread mostly in Germany and the United States, and most tend to peak in the first day, after which the spread rate drops, according to Schmugar.

Users are advised to update their antivirus software to keep the definition files current.

Panda Software Claims Zero-Day Virus Defense

Panda Software on Wednesday announced TruPrevent 2.0, a new version of the company’s antivirus and security technology that Panda claims is "virtually 100 percent effective" in identifying unknown viruses and spyware.

What is notable about Panda’s announcement today is that the company claims the software can work effectively against future viruses and spyware without having to be updated, a claim hitherto unmade in the antivirus community.

The Panda announcement does not come without independent confirmation. According to independent testing lab ICSA, TruPrevent is over 98 percent effective at eliminating malicious software - with zero false positives.

Indeed, most approaches to security today are reactive, which means they can protect the PC from harm only if the virus already is known and a signature file already is installed on the computer.

Without this signature file, most traditional antivirus software is incapable of eliminating viruses - or telling the difference between normal, safe code (such as spreadsheets and word processors) and code with malicious intent, like spyware or worms.

There is software from the likes of Symantec, McAfee, Trend Micro, Cisco and other antivirus-software makers that use heuristics approaches to virus detection, looking for unusual system behavior to identify anything that might indicate viral activity, but no major antivirus vendor has made claims to have near-perfect protection with such technologies.

Furthermore, most heuristics- and rules-based approaches still largely rely on signature files, which can take hours or days to develop and distribute to customers. Panda Software’s approach is based on what the company calls "neural scanning" - a relatively new approach that uses a kind of artificial intelligence to identify whether a computer is being breached.

According to AVlabs.org, it takes an average of 16 hours for the software labs to develop new vaccines and distribute them to users. During the critical gap between virus release and antivirus patch, PCs and networks are of course vulnerable.

And because today’s average outbreak-to-vaccine time is about 16 hours, this leaves millions of PCs vulnerable for hours or even days each time a new instantaneous threat is unleashed.

Panda’s TruPrevent software automatically does a real-time analysis of programs as they execute. It then detects new viruses that have a malicious intent with what the company calls event-correlation algorithms. If malicious code is detected, the software kills it then notifies the user.

While such technologies - including heuristics-based approaches - have been widely praised in the industry for helping to protect users from themselves, one question typically remains: How expensive is the technology in terms of processor resources? Many power users, for example, turn off Symantec’s "bloodhound" technology to avoid resource drains. Because Panda’s new technology just hit the market today, there have been no reports yet about performance issues.

Phishers Using New Methods To Steal User Information

Phishers have been changing tactics recently in an effort to avoid detection and steal user information, according to researchers at security software firm Websense.

In a recent report, Websense and the Anti-Phishing Working Group have noted that there is a rise in the use of keyloggers, programs that record the key strokes of users.

A phisher who has this type of information would have access to passwords, account numbers and other personal data.

In the past, attackers have relied more heavily on e-mail messages that trick users into clicking onto a malicious Web site or handing over their usernames and passwords for online financial sites.

During every week in February and March, Websense reported 10 new keylogger variants as well as more than 100 new Web sites set up to infect computers with the malicious programs.

That is an increase from last November and December, when Websense found only 2 new variants and about 15 new Web sites per week.

Phishers have employed other techniques in the past as well, including exploiting bogus news feeds and taking advantage of mistyped Web addresses for major sites like Amazon.com and Google.

The spreading use of keylogging indicates a trend in phishing activity of removing user interaction from the phishing process.

Already, attackers have found a way to create e-mail lures that do not require user behavior to infect a machine.

Keyloggers, also, would not necessarily need a user for download. These could be placed in an e-mail message that downloads the program automatically even if a user does not open the attachment.

The increasing sophistication of phishing efforts has been expected in the security industry, said Sophos senior technology consultant Graham Cluley.

"We’ve watched phishing go from a kind of amateurish strategy at the

beginning to a highly organized, very technologically savvy method of identity theft," he said.

Because phishers tend to bring together teams of hackers, unlike lone-wolf virus writers, they are able to craft attacks that are focused and effective.

"These are talented people doing bad things," said Cluley. "It’s a shame they can’t put all that expertise to a better use than stealing money."

Three Men Jailed Over Software Piracy Ring

Three British men who gained no money by helping crack security codes to run one of the largest international software piracy rings on the Internet were sentenced Friday to jail terms ranging from 18 months to 2 1/2 years.

The three men - plus a fourth who received a suspended jail sentence - were behind the British end of DrinkOrDie, an international code cracking group that U.S. and British authorities believe cost the software industry billions of dollars in sales every year.

The group, which gained notoriety by releasing a pirated copy of the Windows 95 operating system two weeks before Microsoft Corp. released it, was shut down by authorities in the United States, Australia, Britain and other countries following raids in 2002. More than 20 people in the United States were convicted the same year.

British prosecutors said that the four men sentenced Friday were not involved in the syndicate for money, instead cracking security codes to release the software on the Internet for free.

"They may see themselves as latter-day Robin Hoods, stealing from the rich to give to the poor, but in reality it is a cover for fraud," prosecutor Bruce Houlder told the Old Bailey Criminal Court during the trial. "Computers are their universe. They live and breathe a world of computer software."

Banker Alex Bell, 29, was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in jail, and Steven Dowd, who is 39 and unemployed, was sentenced to two years after they were both found guilty of conspiracy to defraud at a trial earlier this year. IT manager Mark Vent was sentenced to 18 months after pleading guilty to conspiracy to defraud.

Andrew Eardley, a former school IT worker, was given an 18 month sentence, suspended for two years. The suspension means that with good behavior, he may not serve the jail sentence.

Judge Paul Focke said he had imposed the jail terms as a deterrent to other potential Internet pirates.

"The activities of all four of you struck at the heart of the software trade," he said. "The loss of software to owners through piracy is staggering. Also, the effect on related businesses and the lives of employees can be rendered catastrophic."

Focke said that an estimated third of software being used in Britain was pirated and resulted in a loss of revenue that was impossible to quantify.

Focke also dismissed the claims the four men intended to provide free access to everyone.

"Your motivation was not only the benefit of free access," he said. "It was to enhance your personal reputation and to be a member of an organization at the leading edge of technology, crossing the legal boundary."

Protect Passwords? Not If Latte Is Free

Would you give up your computer passwords for a Starbucks latte? "imasexyguy" did. So did "raiderfan." The football fanatic even gave it to a radio reporter - to put on the air. And then he told the interviewer he still wasn’t going to change it.

In a marketing stunt designed to shine a light on sloppy personal cybersecurity, VeriSign on Thursday offered passersby in downtown San Francisco $3 coffee coupons if they would reveal their passwords to survey-takers.

Two-thirds of the 272 respondents turned over their passwords without flinching. The rain and then a BART bomb scare seemed more problematic. A few who said they simply would give a made-up password were dropped from the results, though they did get free coffee. And with a little coaxing, 70 percent of those who said "no way" gave up significant hints, like wife’s name, anniversary date and the ever popular pet’s name.

Upping the risk of digital theft ID, 79 percent said they use the same password for multiple Web sites or applications.

Nearly 60 percent of the respondents have four or more passwords. Instant recall is impossible. So some list them on Post-its stuck on their office computers. Bad idea. Two gadget guys showed off how they keep track, right there in a neat list on their cell phones.

You would think people in the Bay Area might show more tech sophistication, said VeriSign executive Mark Griffiths. "People are in denial," he said.

To wit: One executive, too busy to stop, sent his secretary back with his password so he could get the free coffee. She gave up hers, too.

Internet Cuts Need for Bike Messengers

Bicycle messengers once crowded downtown traffic to deliver court papers, business documents and blueprints. Today, only one such company and one lone courier pump along on any given workday in Maine’s biggest city.

Around the country, high-speed Internet, which allows larger documents to be e-mailed quickly, is beating cyclists in the race for fast and cheap delivery of urgently needed material.

"I enjoy this. It’s a lot of fun. But it’s not a tenable way to make a living," said Portland courier Stephen Wagner, taking a break on a park

bench. "You'd be dirt poor if you did this for a living."

Wagner, 22, splits his time working for Rapid Courier and a bike shop.

In recent years, many courier companies from New York to California have been scaling back on bicycle messengers, those daredevils on two wheels who have long been ubiquitous on city streets.

But don't count them all out. They survived the fax revolution, and riders say they'll survive broadband Internet as well.

"There's still potential there. There's still stuff that needs to be hand-delivered," said Bob Smyth, a former bicycle messenger in Boston and San Francisco who came to Portland to serve as office manager for Rapid Courier.

At the peak, around 1992, there were about 14 or 15 bicycle messengers working for four or five companies in Portland, said Percy Wheeler, a former messenger who worked for several companies and himself as Mad Dash Courier.

The cyclists earned their reputations as rebels by weaving in and out of traffic, jumping curbs and bouncing down stairs.

But business began riding downhill with fax machines and e-mail. Broadband made things worse.

Years ago, it was common for a courier to pocket more than $100 a day in Portland, Wheeler said. Now, $100 represents a rare good day.

In San Francisco, Speedway used to have 30 bicycle messengers but there are now 12, said Lori O'Rourke, one of the owners. Another company, Quicksilver, had 14 messengers five years ago and now has only two, said dispatcher Stacey Means.

In Chicago, Velocity has half as many bicycle messengers as it did in 1999, when there were about two dozen riders, said Kyle Wiberg, a co-owner.

In Seattle, Dynamex had 15 to 20 riders at the peak; now there are five or six, said Phil Matthews, senior dispatcher.

"At this rate, in five to 10 years, I don't think there'll be bicycle messengers," Matthews said.

New York is the nation's bicycle messenger capital, with about 1,000. Fax machines and computers can't deliver fabric samples to the garment district, or hand-signed legal documents, or portfolios or blueprints.

But even in New York, growth has stagnated.

The number of bicycle messengers at Breakaway Courier has dropped from 100 to 40, said Robert Kotch, the company's president. New York Minute has 15 riders, roughly half what it had a couple of years ago, said Mike Sirota, general manager.

New York's Urban Express, which has 250 bicycle messengers, reports that bicycle work has been flat while vehicle deliveries continue to grow.

Portland's Wheeler, 35, left the business after someone in a parked car threw open a door as he sped down Congress Street. The collision sent him

careening to the ground, leaving him with a smashed helmet, gashed hand, numerous cuts and road rash. He hung up his bicycle messenger bag and his two-way radio and now runs a bicycle repair shop. But he misses it.

"I just miss riding my bike every day. I miss the fitness," he said. "I don’t like being inside every day."

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